



**CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS  
URBAN FORESTRY COMMITTEE  
JOSEPH A. CURTATONE  
MAYOR**

**Urban Forestry Committee Meeting  
THURSDAY, APRIL 15, 2021 4:30PM  
MINUTES**

**Due to COVID-19 virus containment efforts, this meeting was held remotely.**

A recording of the meeting can be accessed here:

<https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/recording/8209030093618766350>

*Meeting notes prepared by Conor Guidarelli & Vanessa Boukili*

**Committee Members in attendance:** Althea Northcross (Co-Chair), Amy Mertl, Chris Dwan (Co-Chair), Conor Guidarelli, Jennifer Clifford, Leah Grossman, Vanessa Boukili (Senior Urban Forestry and Landscape Planner), Tori Antonino, Malik Drayton (Tree Warden designee)

**Committee Members absent:** Mark Lawhorne (Tree Warden), Henry Ayana

**Others in Attendance:** Daniel Liu, Zachary Rosenburg

**Call to Order:** Dwan called meeting to order at 4:35 pm followed by introductions

**1. Introductions / Housekeeping**

- Introductions by all UFC members and residents in attendance
- Guidarelli taking minutes for this meeting. Antonino taking minutes for May meeting.
- Northcross: Reminder to complete the conflict of interest training

**2. Resident Concerns**

- a. Zack in attendance to listen to the proceedings. Daniel attending for line item 3 on agenda.
- b. Dwan: Gave thanks to the City for providing the spreadsheet with permitted tree removals and waivers. Was able to respond to residents immediately and effectively with their concerns.
- c. Grossman: Large Pin Oak in Lincoln Park has some really large swaths of white bark. Posted pictures to the webinar for everyone to see. White streaks going up the tree on a co-dominant leader. Near outdoor gym equipment in park.
  - i. Further investigation by committee members (Clifford).

- ii. Antonino: Wanted to stress the importance of the balance of nature and that it looks attractive. Striking display of cohabitation of insects and fungus etc. Would be ideal to keep the tree.
- iii. Guidarelli: The tree is located in a high risk location and has poor structural integrity should the signs of infection prove to be compromising to the tree's health. Should prioritize to remove if such is the case.



### 3. Hearing of Request for Private Tree Removal Waiver – 1006 Broadway

- a. Drayton: Large lot, concerns with trees interacting and posing potential threats. \$60-80K to get rid of trees (including in lieu payment for Private Tree Removal and removal cost estimate).
- b. Daniel Liu: Homeowner of 1006 Broadway. Making case for a waiver. Purchased house 3-4 years ago. In the past two or three years neighbors (lot has 6-7 neighbors) have approached him. Large trees on the lot that the previous owner didn't take care of. Trees are closer to his neighbor's properties, very close to structures. Neighbors wanted to share the cost and help find someone to cut down the trees, especially since owner lost job and has been out of work. Fielded lots of complaints. Neighbors have signed petition to remove 10 trees from the lot. Biggest complaint is an Eastern White Pine next to 1002 Broadway. Google Street View doesn't fully show all the trees in conflict.
- c. Dwan: Appreciative of the details regarding this story. Appears that Liu's circumstance just missed a lot of the waivers in place (hazardous tree, invasive species, owner occupant). Committee creates space for the conversation but the Tree Warden ultimately decides.
- d. Drayton: This is still under review and wanted to find a balance so that homeowners don't face financial hardship.

- e. Liu: Trees are closer to neighbor's property and they have tried pruning them to their best ability but because previous owner did no maintenance on the trees, feels obligated to make an effort now that there's a neighbor coalition to share in the cost of the removals. Overall frustration by the neighbors.



- f. Dwan: Neighbors are allowed to remove any overhanging tree limb on their property.
- g. Mertl: Is there space to plant other trees on the property? Dwan reiterated that there is an option to replace caliper inches lost from tree removals.
- h. Liu: Doesn't believe that there is any more room on the property for additional trees.
- i. Antonino: Suggested pruning them and appreciating what beauty and ecological benefit that they provide to the property. Offered that a portion of the property could be eased to the city so that it could become a pocket park.
- j. Liu: Loves the trees, loves the beauty of the trees. Feels bad about the circumstances but would like to take down the trees in question.
- k. Lots of thanks for coming and sharing his story and plight by the committee. Clifford suggested that the trees start out by being pruned first before the removal of the trees. Guidarelli seconds the first measure of pruning the trees. Neighbors willing to put in money for a removal may also have a willingness to fund pruning.
- l. Drayton: Wanted to bring this conversation to the committee to be transparent about this difficult case. Would have to do a site analysis and create a report of each individual tree's impacts. Allowing the trees to remain standing and maintained will be cheaper than removals and payment for new trees or funding the tree fund. No need for a formal letter from the committee.



#### 4. UFC Support Letter for Engineering MVP Grant Proposal

- a. Haleemah Qureshi presenting on new Highland Ave Project, which goes back into design later this year. Project extends from Cutter Ave to Hamlet St, treating the whole corridor as one project rather than segments as previously presented.
- b. Applying to the MVP Grant Proposal to aid in developing Urban Forestry infrastructure and looking for input and support as to the redesign of the streetscape.
- c. Northcross: Has experience with streetscapes, what is the ethic/stance this project will take on preserving existing trees? How will this project increase green material and coverage? Understands this is early in the process.
- d. Qureshi: Similar to the Spring Hill Project ethic where all healthy existing trees will be preserved. Green infrastructure will come down to competing with rights of way, underground infrastructure, etc. Creating a balance between maximizing greening and other interests. Want to create a strategic goals and targeted approach with this grant. Looking for support from committee to sign onto letter to help receive grant so that funding can be obtained to do the design work.
- e. Clifford: Will bus stop infrastructure maximize greening opportunity with green roofs?
- f. Qureshi: Analysis to be done during the design phase with this grant. Will take into full account and try to understand the competing needs. Not wanting to sacrifice one for another.
- g. Antonino: Wanting to know about native plantings for streetscape work and ensure the bioswales are mostly native. Qureshi states that it will go through a similar design process and phase as Spring Hill Project.
- h. Antonino: Requests language in letter for support regarding just native species. Northcross reiterated the importance of this action to just sign and show support for the City's initiative. The native ordinance will be mentioned in the application. Northcross added statement of reference to the native planting ordinance in the letter.
- i. **Call to vote to approve and send UFC support letter for MVP Grant Proposal, as amended:**
  - i. Yay: Northcross, Mertl, Dwan, Guidarelli, Clifford, Grossman, Boukili, Antonino, Drayton.
  - ii. Nay: none
  - iii. Abstain: none
- j. Antonino: Would getting community groups support be helpful (e.g. Green & Open Somerville, etc.)? Boukili agreed it would only help contribute to the application.

#### 5. Draft Invitation Letter

- a. Outline needs comments added to it from Boukili and others. Guidarelli to resend it out once the letter and outline have comments added and can be compiled into one document.
- b. Grossman asked for clarity that this is just an invitation not a summons.
- c. Committee has ability to comment and advise on trees and shrubs on any public property.
- d. Boukili: Ordinance also allows for Committee to provide feedback on civic projects under permit review.

## 6. Safe Streets Design Toolkit

- a. Somerville Alliance for Safe Streets
- b. Dwan: Safety is paramount in the city and it is a public good. Safety should come first before the preference of any individual groups (tree, bikes, etc.). Put together a document that highlights shared design interests that various groups can agree on. Document provided for review of the streetscape designs.
- c. Requesting feedback on the diversity of ideas in the document, that if there's a unanimous consensus on a design concept that a memo could be written by the committee to issue to the City Council. This is especially important for the upcoming Highland project.
- d. Antonino: Very impressed and excited about the prospects of this document.
- e. Clifford: Cambridge program to plant street tree on resident side of sidewalk. Helping with equity issues and providing green space for everybody.
- f. Northcross: Accessibility and trees is often overlooked topic but a mighty important one, thankful for advocate groups coming forward with this. Creative design solutions for streetscape for disenfranchised groups.
- g. Dwan: Requests email feedback from committee members for input on document. Would love to have support from committee.
- h. Northcross: Would like more time to review and would appreciate another refined document iteration.
- i. Dwan: Goal is to provide this to City Council to have their support. Will bring back a refined document for the committee's approval.
- j. Drayton: The idea of putting a tree in a bumpout on the corner is not viable. It impedes visibility. Boukili: it is also not good for the long-term survival of the tree, as it is very likely to be hit by a car.

## 7. Updates from City

- a. City Tree Removals - *Tabled*
- b. Private Tree Removal Permit(s) and Exception(s) - *Tabled*
- c. City Tree Planting
  - i. Leahy is contractor for this year. They get their trees from Tuckahoe nursery. Boukili selected 100 trees to plant this Spring, as there's a shortage in labor to be able to plant more. Will plant a lot more in the Fall.
  - ii. Boukilli can share list of chosen plants.
  - iii. Antonino: Has been in contact with Archewild. Will share plant inventory and correspondence. Could add them as another contractor to aid in planting.
  - iv. Boukili: That's not how the contract works and it's too soon to add another. Current contract covers Spring and Fall 2021.
- d. Urban Forest Management Plan - *Tabled*

## 8. Ongoing Work Updates - *Tabled*

- a. Arbor Day Planning
  - i. DCR 5<sup>th</sup> grader poster contest
  - ii. Adopt-a-Tree program
  - iii. ROOT collaboration
- b. GLX Corridor
- c. Tree Species Selection and Planting Standards
- d. Native Planting Ordinance
- e. Funding / Fundraising

## **9. Approval of Minutes from Previous Meetings**

### **Call to vote to approve March 18<sup>th</sup>, 2020 meeting minutes:**

- 1. Yay: Mertl, Dwan, Guidarelli, Clifford, Grossman, Drayton, Boukili, Antonino, Northcross
- 2. Nay: none
- 3. Abstain: none

**Adjourn:** Motion to adjourn meeting unanimously approved at 6:30 pm [motion - Antonino, second – Clifford, vote: 9:0:0]